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ABSTRACT

This book deals with several aspects of teaching everyday survival skills to adult English as a second language (ESL) students. The basic orientation of the book is based on a determination of skills students need to cope in a community. This determination involves consideration of the skills the community requires, the skills the students lack, and the skills the person may reasonably learn in a given period of time. A list of basic skills for beginning students is provided. The other sections of the book give practical suggestions for: (1) placing and evaluating students, (2) developing teaching strategies for the pre-book class, (3) examining the literacy factor in coping skills, (4) considering cultural factors, and (5) using community resources to gather material. Concrete examples are provided throughout the book; the final section provides a sample lesson plan and a bibliography of resources. (Author/AMH)

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LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION:
Theory and Practice
46

Ellen D. Vaut

ESL/Coping Skills for Adult Learners

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Sophia Behrens, Editor

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Introduction

The field of English as a Second Language (ESL) has grown steadily in recent years in response to the numbers of non-English-speaking people who are in this country for reasons of education, business, or resettlement. Although non-English speakers have always been a part of our society, ESL did not really take shape as a profession until World War II and the influx of refugees that resulted from it.

Today, ESL is more than ever in the limelight. In spite of impending budget cuts and the controversy over bilingual and second language education, ESL programs have been at the forefront of the resettlement process of an enormous new wave of refugees, including Indochinese, Cubans, Soviet Jews, and Haitians.

ESL really came of age at the universities and public schools, where methods and materials for teaching it were developed and refined. However, few teacher-training programs prepared their ESL teachers to deal with a student who was illiterate in his or her own language. Most textbooks followed a common sequence in language skill building that did not address the needs of a person resettled in a totally new and confusing culture. Faced with this new breed of ESL student, teachers and curriculum planners have taken stock of their programs and are currently adding a whole new dimension to the field: the instruction of "coping skills" through ESL. This paper will treat the planning and teaching of ESL/coping skills courses for the low-level adult student, with a particular emphasis on the illiterate Indochinese refugee. Suggestions will be made regarding content, methodology, and cultural awareness.

"Coping skills" and "survival English" have become common terms in ESL of late. However, there is a wide range in the interpretation of these terms, depending, of course, on the level of the students in need of them. Generally speaking, coping skills are those skills that provide the students with practical abilities that enable them to function in the new culture. The determination of what skills students need to cope in the community in which they are resettled should be based on a realistic assessment of what skills the community requires, what skills the students lack, and what skills they can reasonably learn in a given period of time.

In dealing with the first two factors, it is important to know something about your students and the societies from which they

come. This will help you predict their potential lifestyles in this country and what coping skills they will need both in the short and the long run. You should find out if they were urban or rural dwellers, if they were ever employed, and if they ever went to school, even if only for a few years. Being familiar with your students' backgrounds will also help you evaluate their potential learning styles--an important consideration in placing them in your program.

Who are the new consumers of ESL whose impact on the country has resulted in the proliferation of coping skills programs? The group that has perhaps most influenced the development of these programs and a nationwide interest in second language literacy instruction is that which comprises the former inhabitants of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Collectively, they are known as Indochinese. However, references to Indochinese refugees often give the impression that all these groups have the same backgrounds and, therefore, the same needs when it comes to coping skills. In reality, the groups are quite different from each other and, as is true in any setting, members of the same ethnic group represent a wide range of abilities.

The one thing these groups have in common is their need to adjust to a new way of life. To this end, three steps are usually followed in the resettlement of Indochinese refugees in this country: provision for immediate and short-term sustenance (housing, food, clothes, access to health care, etc.), training (ESL, vocational training, GED, university), and eventual employment. The goal of the resettlement process is to equip the refugees with the tools they need to become self-reliant. The training part of the process is the all-important link, then, between dependence and independence.

Because not all refugees have the same needs or the same level of ability, it is extremely important to make the ESL portion of their training as realistic and relevant to their resettlement goals as possible. You must take these goals into account as you develop your instructional objectives. However, students' goals and what is really possible may sometimes differ, especially if they are comparing themselves with other refugees who have begun the resettlement process with more education and fewer adjustment problems. But the students are not the only ones who may have unrealistic expectations of what they can accomplish. The community may have some fairly unreasonable ideas about the skills students will need to "fit in" to the community, and especially the length of time it will take them to acquire these skills. In the middle of student and community expectations is the teacher, who must satisfy both sides. Your role is crucial in identifying what are realistic as opposed to unrealistic expectations on everyone's part

(including your own). If this is understood from the outset, you will have fewer problems in educating the community and the students about the possibilities and limitations of ESL.

Determining Student Expectations

Beginning-level refugee students are often not in a position to state their expectations of an ESL/coping skills program. If an interpreter is available, you should ask your students what they hope to learn in the program. Their replies may be simple: "We want to learn English" or "We want to learn to read and write." If pressed, they may answer, "We want to learn enough English so that we can get further training." Rarely will you hear, "We want to be able to read prices, count money, and tell time in English." Previously uneducated students will tend especially to view the goal of the program in general rather than specific terms. They may see "learning English" as the final goal, and not as a bridge to another phase of the resettlement process.

If at all possible, students should be assisted in developing a set of realistic personal objectives. They should be made aware of the vocational options available to them and what training they will need and be able to get. In this way, they will be better able to form realistic expectations of the program and themselves.

Community Expectations

The community's perception of the power of the ESL program to impart linguistic and cultural information can be just as unrealistic as the student's. The refugee's sponsor or welfare counselor may expect the student to be ready for advanced training in an absurdly short period of time. When three months have passed and the student still cannot read, the program may be held responsible. To avoid creating a program that is doomed to failure, or at least highly suspect, the curriculum planner and teacher must assist the community in transforming its expectations into realistic objectives.

Just as the student's "I want to learn English" lacks specificity, so does the counselor's "Teach them enough English to get a job." As the person responsible for helping the students achieve their goals, you need to know what goals the counselor has in mind for the students. What jobs or further training will be available to them? By enlisting the advice of your students' counselors as you plan your curriculum, you can discover what their criteria are for judging job readiness. You can also

discuss the students' learning potential and what you feel their limitations will be. This is particularly helpful to the counselor if there are any time limitations on the students' training allotment. In addition, you can work with potential employers, helping them to realize that language learning is not confined to a classroom but will be facilitated by real settings and situations.

Teacher Expectations

The teacher's orientation and ability are the keys to success of any language program. How the instructional objectives are interpreted depends on your understanding of them. Being familiar with student backgrounds and community opinions is important, but you also need to be able to see your role in the program in perspective. Because teaching coping skills and literacy skills in second language instruction is not often stressed in ESL teacher-training programs, many teachers find themselves casting about for materials and methods that will suit student learning styles. Yet, more important than these is your realization that the goal of the program is the students' learning to cope in society, not the use of a particular method or special material.

As a teacher, you must decide which method works best for you and your students and what material is most suitable. Be careful not to set your standards too high or too low for your class. Remember that the purpose is for all students to learn as much English as they are capable of doing.

The coping skills you decide to teach must be chosen with one more factor in mind. It must be possible to impart them through ESL instruction. This is definitely not the case with all coping skills. If your students are beginning or even intermediate, there are many ideas that you will not be able to get across to them. For example, filling out complicated forms such as government forms, medical histories, and job applications will require assistance from an interpreter. Even native speakers have trouble with these.

Basic Skills for Lowest Level Students

What, then, are low-level coping skills that can easily be taught through ESL? Here is a list of very basic skills for the lowest level student:

- Giving name and address orally, and being able to spell them
- Recognizing name and address when written

- Writing name and address
- Understanding number concepts
- Recognizing and writing numbers
- Being able to read and write telephone numbers, alien registration number, social security number, etc.
- Telling time from a clock
- Reading digital time
- Reading prices
- Counting money
- Understanding the calendar system
- Reading dates
- Giving birthdate orally and in writing
- Answering personal information questions ("Are you married?" "How many children do you have?" "Where are you from?")
- Understanding and responding to common directives ("Stand up." "Turn left/right." "Pick up the pencil," etc.)
- Understanding simple measurements and being able to read abbreviations (e.g., lb., oz., ft., in.)
- Identifying common clothing and food items
- Asking for help
- Reading common public signs (Walk, Don't Walk, Exit.)
- Understanding weather and how to dress for it
- Knowing how to use and clean household appliances (refrigerator, toilet)
- Being able to ask for a bus transfer
- Being able to use the telephone for emergencies
- Being able to say that one is sick and being able to describe or locate pain

- Knowing common verbs (go, see, eat, like, etc.) and their negative forms

After identifying the coping skills necessary for your students, you should consider other aspects of a program that endeavors to teach these skills through ESL. The following sections will include practical suggestions for (1) placing and evaluating your students, (2) developing teaching strategies for the pre-book class, (3) examining the literacy factor in coping skills, (4) considering cultural factors, and (5) using community resources to gather material. The final section provides a sample lesson plan and a bibliography of resources.

Placement and Evaluation

Evaluation is an inherent part of instruction. The teacher needs to consider two kinds of evaluation procedures: one for intake and placement, and one to measure progress within the program. Both of these procedures are somewhat tricky at the very low levels. The teacher cannot simply rely on standard scores, but must take several factors into consideration. The following ideas may be of help:

Placement

There are several good oral placement tests on the market that reportedly work well with low-level students (see Bibliography). Although it may seem to you that your incoming students are not testable, even at the very lowest level, there are some indications of student potential that you should look for during a placement interview. For example:

- Watch how students behave during the interview; are they active or passive participants?
- Notice whether or not they are focused on their environment.
- Check for perceptual or physical impairments that could affect learning.
- Ask students to write their name and notice how they handle a pencil.

Older people and women who have never been to school may seem passive and unfocused. These traits can be manifestations of several conditions: shyness, embarrassment, or culture shock. Do not underestimate these students. It may be that they simply need time to adjust to the school environment. Provision for cultural and academic adjustment should be built into the program.

If the student that you are trying to place does not respond well to standard testing material, you should base your placement on your own set of instructional objectives. Make up a short checklist that will cover the general hierarchy of skills for which you are testing. Here is a sample:

_____ Ask the students common questions such as "What is your name?" "What is your address?" (Note whether the student answers with a sentence or with the name

and address only, or shows a piece of paper with the information on it.)

_____ Ask them to identify common objects (e.g., pen, book, table).

_____ Hold up the fingers of one hand and ask, "How many fingers?"

_____ Using a toy clock, ask them the time on the hour first, then on the half hour.

_____ Ask them to count money.

_____ Give them some common directions (e.g., "Stand up." "Open the door." "Pick up the pencil").

_____ Putting on top of a book a pencil or another object that they have identified, ask, "Where is the pencil?"

_____ Using action pictures, ask, "What is she (or he) doing?"

_____ Have them write their name and address.

_____ Have them identify the letters of the alphabet (upper and lower case, in order and randomly).

_____ Have them identify numbers.

_____ Ask them to read prices and digital time.

_____ Ask them to read common words (e.g., name, book).

_____ If the students can do the above, have them read a simple sentence ("The pencil is on the table").

_____ If they can do all of the above, they should be tested in the textbooks used in the more advanced classes.

Even with this placement procedure, some students are bound to end up in classes that are too slow or too fast for them. If your program is large enough, you should have the flexibility to change them to a more appropriate group. Where this is not possible, you will have to find ways to address their particular learning style. (See the section below on suggestions for the multilevel class.)

After the students are in the program, their progress will be evaluated continually. Because it is not possible to give traditional tests at this level, evaluation may be informal. A good way to check your students is through daily review of past material. At the beginning of each class, spend about ten minutes going over old material. For example, ask each student a question as you take attendance. When students show mastery of the material (they are able to respond correctly to the same material two times), make note of it. A quick and easy way to do this is by using a grid checklist (see Figure 1).

You may want to use a large checklist to make your students aware of their progress in relation to the rest of the class. In this case, make your checklist on poster board and pin it to the wall. You can let the students themselves check off for the various content areas they master. (Do not do this if it inhibits your class.)

Figure 1

Sample Checklist

(ac) aural comprehension (op) oral production (rc) reading comprehension (wp) written production									
(ac) Directions									
(ac/op) Name									
(ac/op) Address									
(rc/wp) Name/Address									
(ac/op) Common objects									
(rc/wp) Numbers to 25									
(ac/op) Numbers to 25 with plural (2 chairs)									
(ac/op) Time on hour									
(ac/op) Verbs (get up, go, eat, drink)									
(ac/op) Verbs & Time (I get up at 6:00.)									
(ac/op) Family: husband, wife, child(ren)									
(ac/op) She and he with verbs									
(ac/op) Money to 25¢									
(rc/wp) Food items									
(ac/op) Verbs (like, buy, cook)									
(ac/op) "How much is it?"									
(ac/op) Numbers to 100									

The Pre-Book Class

Deciding whether or not to use a textbook in your class is very important. There are good arguments for and against the use of textbooks in classes where the students cannot read and write their own language. If your students have some education and are literate in their own language (even though it is not based on the Roman alphabet), you probably will not want to hesitate too long before giving them a text. Books can act as an incentive for those students who know how to use them. They can also provide a focus for your lessons, although you should not spend all your class time using the book.

In fact, most students, literate or not, come to school expecting to receive a book. If they do not, they are disappointed. Books are symbols of learning, and some people feel that where no books are used, no learning takes place. Yet having a textbook can be a disadvantage for the language learner if the book and its use become central to the learning process. Too much time is spent in orienting students to textbook use when they should be practicing real language in a real context. In addition, not everyone is ready to learn to read immediately. It is best to first prepare students with "pre-book" work before using a text. For the purposes of this paper, we will concentrate on those classes that do not rely on a text.

The basis for the pre-book ESL class comes most naturally from the students' need and desire to function adequately in this culture, therefore actively contributing to the successful resettlement of their families. It has been said that the teacher can determine these needs more easily through familiarity with the students' backgrounds, the requirements of the community, and the potential lifestyles of the students within the community. In addition, the ability of the teacher to teach the required skills through ESL must be established.

You may find yourself choosing, adapting, and discarding various methods as you seek teaching techniques that work at the lower levels. Almost any method that does not require too much independence on the part of the student can be incorporated into a coping skills lesson. The most important point to remember is that any method is only a means of imparting information. If the students are confused by it or do not respond to it, you must be flexible enough to change it.

When planning your lesson, you will have to be especially careful to make sure that the vocabulary you wish to teach is clearly represented. You should have a good supply of visual aids at your disposal. If you are teaching a pre-literate group, you probably will not be using a textbook, so you will

need to gather some resources that can serve as visual cues to stimulate response. A good idea is to have your collection of visual aids close at hand in a bag or a box so that you can use them to illustrate coping skills problems that arise in class. Your visuals might include the following items:

- a clock--real or homemade
- a number and letter chart
- sample money (real is best)
- a calendar
- a bus transfer
- a color chart (or color pens)
- a variety of sample price tags
- a ruler or tape measure
- a map of the neighborhood--real or simplified
- a map of the world
- a pocket chart and sight words
- dollhouse furniture

It is essential to have a good picture dictionary available if your students cannot use a dictionary in their first language. Two picture dictionaries that are useful to have on hand are the Oxford Picture Dictionary of American English (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) and 500 Words to Grow On (New York: Random House, 1973). The latter is a children's dictionary, so be prepared for some useless vocabulary. The illustrations are extremely clear and colorful, however, and much of the book is of interest to the average student.

If you cannot obtain any of these books, you can make your own dictionary in the form of a picture file. Using family magazines, catalogues, and Sunday newspaper sales supplements, cut out pictures of food, furniture, appliances, clothing, tools, hygiene products, etc., and mount them on cardboard. Arrange them by subject matter in a file or looseleaf binder. Add to your file as you continue to discover your students' areas of interest.

When you are planning what visuals to use in your lesson, a good rule of thumb is that "real is best." Real items have more meaning than do imitations or pictures. A real apple will make a far greater impression on your students than a wax or plastic one, especially if you allow them to sample it at the end of the lesson. The "real is best" rule also applies to the teaching environment. To add immediacy to your lesson about shopping, take your class to the supermarket. This way you will take your lesson out of the four walls of the classroom and demonstrate to your students that the language they are learning can have real and immediate application.

You yourself are another source of visual aids. By using the body creatively, you can mime familiar actions and procedures for which you do not have the appropriate setting. Students usually appreciate the "theater" and may enjoy becoming actors themselves. For practice, try to act out the following situations: looking for a lost item, crossing a busy street, approaching an angry dog, and making a pay telephone call.

Teaching Strategies for the Pre-Book Class

After you have planned your curriculum objectives, evaluated and placed your students, and gathered your materials, it is time to plan your teaching strategies. For the pre-book class, you will be emphasizing aural/oral abilities while introducing literacy skills. We will now look at some practical techniques for teaching these skills in low-level adult classes.

Aural/Oral Techniques

In the beginning, the pre-book class will spend most of its time on the development of listening and speaking abilities. Reading and writing skill development will come later, except for the essential coping skill of reading and writing one's own name, address, and other important personal information. For the ESL teacher who is accustomed to following a textbook, planning and teaching a lesson that is entirely oral can be exhausting. The urge to reinforce oral work with written work is hard to overcome, and some teachers will find themselves writing on the chalkboard to illustrate a language point only to realize that no one can read it. To help your lesson run smoothly, plan a variety of activities of different pace. Be prepared to add extra practice if needed, or to replace difficult exercises with easier ones. In short, be flexible and, above all, be practical.

The objective of your lesson is to get the students to actually use in a meaningful way the material you teach. It is equally important to teach your students language skills such as active listening and clear pronunciation. All these skills should be practiced in your lesson, but they should be practiced in context to be most effective.

The following is an outline of the components of an oral/aural lesson:[1]

I. Review. Plan on spending five to ten minutes going over previously taught material. This is a good way to start the class off on a positive note, because the students will have more confidence with known material. It is also an opportunity to evaluate.

II. Check homework or finish up old business from the previous class.

III. Present new material.

A. Listening exercises

B. Speaking exercises

1. Repetition

2. Response

C. Practical application such as a dialogue or role-play

IV. Literacy exercises. This can be as simple as copying letters and numbers.

V. General integrated activity. Go on a field trip, play a game, or teach a procedure for which you have just taught the English.

VI. Review day's work and assign homework.

Not every lesson that you plan will follow the same format. Lesson content varies to suit the situation. But the importance of making a plan is undisputed. A well-planned lesson is one that works toward a realistic objective that can be evaluated at the end of the lesson. Be sure you know what your objective is before you walk into class. When you do not have a textbook to

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[1] See Appendix A for a comprehensive sample lesson plan.

guide you, it is especially important that you provide a clear focal point for your class so that your students are not confused or frustrated. If it is their first educational experience, they will need a teacher who is in control of the material.

Now let's look more closely at the skill development components and possible exercises to be included in them.

Listening Exercises

One of the most important language skills your students will need is listening comprehension. Being able to follow directions in the workplace or to ask for clarification will help your students adjust better to employment. It is important to begin early to train them to listen actively for information and indicate whether or not they have understood what they are to do.

The ability to listen well can also improve pronunciation. For at least one part of your lesson every day, you should insist that your students not talk but only listen and respond accordingly. Through the use of instructions, you can measure their comprehension. For example, you are teaching three new words (hammer, wrench, and screwdriver). Previously, you have taught "Point to...." Now you want to teach "Pick up..." and "Put down...." Follow these steps:

- Gesture for students to be quiet and listen.
- Hold up the tools, one at a time, as you say their names.
- Repeat the names two or three times, speaking naturally.
- Put the tools on the table in front of the class. Say "Point to the hammer," etc. If the students do not respond, demonstrate the correct action.
- Repeat these steps until the students respond correctly.
- Pick up a tool as you say, "Pick up."
- Repeat this action with the other tools and any other items that the students know.
- Do the same for "Put down."
- Say, "Pick up the hammer" and indicate for a student to respond accordingly.

- Say, "Put down the hammer" and indicate for the student to respond accordingly.

- Repeat this procedure for the other tools.

- Continue giving directions until the students are comfortable with the material.

Other listening exercises:

- Give each student an object and give "Pick up" and "Put down" instructions to the class. The individual students must then listen for their particular objects and respond correctly to the directions.

- Put Cuisenaire rods, or other known objects, in a box, basket, or hat. Pass the container and give students the following instructions:

  Take one green rod (or stick).

  Take one red rod, two blue rods, and four orange rods.

  Take four red rods and give one to _____.

  Take five green rods and give me two.

- To practice prepositions, try these directions:

  Put your pen on the floor and your notebook under the table.

  Draw a house. Draw a man in the house. Draw a hat on the man.

  Draw a square. Draw a circle in the square. Draw a triangle under the square.

- Set up a store using food pictures or realia:

  Go to the store. Buy three apples, twelve eggs, and one chicken.

- To reinforce the learning of body parts, give these instructions:

  Show me your right hand.

  Put your left hand on your head.

  Show me three fingers.

- Using a flannel board and figures, or paper doll or doll clothes, practice the following:

  Put on her jacket.

  Take off his shoes.

- After teaching vocabulary relating to clothes, look around the class and describe one student (e.g., "She is wearing a blue shirt, black pants, and brown shoes. Who is she?"). The students have to listen carefully to make a correct guess.

- Give your students directions around the room or outside:

  Stand up. Walk. Don't walk. Go straight. Stop. Turn left. Turn right.

  Set up a walkway between rows of chairs. Put obstacles in the path. Guide your students through it with appropriate directions.

- Tell your students a short story and ask questions.

Listening exercises can be incorporated into almost anything you do. Even if you are not using any new material but simply reinforcing old material, a listening exercise at the beginning of each class will prepare your students to listen actively to what follows.[1]

Speaking Exercises

The development of oral skills usually follows this pattern: (1) repetition, (2) responses, and (3) application through actual use in a dialogue or role-play situation, or on a field trip.

Repetition

Most new language learners tend to parrot everything the teacher says. There are times when you will want them to repeat, but not before you teach them to listen actively to what you are saying. Insist that students listen without talking while you model the target word, phrase, or sentence two or three times.

Although modelling and repetition do not sound complicated, there are some important points to keep in mind:

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[1] See Appendix A for a comprehensive sample lesson plan.

- Do not speak unnaturally slowly or loudly.

- Do not use improper intonation. Your students may be listening for tones.

- Limit your verbalizing to exactly what you want your students to reproduce.

- Use clear, consistent gestures for "Don't speak," "Listen," and "Repeat."

- Do not place too much emphasis on correct pronunciation at first. Your students will hesitate to speak if they are constantly corrected.

- Have your students repeat as a group before you call on individuals. Call on confident students first.

- Use backward build-up for longer sentences. Starting at the end rather than at the beginning of the sentence, have students repeat words or phrases until they have said the whole sentence. By working from back to front, you reinforce the part students tend to forget first.

Repetition is usually practiced in controlled drills. These may be difficult for some students at first. You should plan on giving them clear examples of what you expect of them. In addition, give plenty of positive feedback to those students who respond correctly. Have them help the other students.

Here are three repetition exercises that students can generally perform with little trouble:

(1) Repetition Drill

Teacher: I go to school.

Students: I go to school.

Teacher: I go to work.

Students: I go to work.

(2) Substitution Drill

(In this drill, the teacher substitutes different words in the pattern. The students must make the appropriate changes.)

Teacher: I go to school at 9:00.

Students: I go to school at 9:00.

Teacher: He.

Students: He goes to school at 9:00.

(For more of a challenge, the teacher can substitute in more than one slot.)

Teacher: He goes to school at 9:00.

Students: He goes to school at 9:00.

Teacher: 7:30.

Students: He goes to school at 7:30.

Teacher: To work.

Students: He goes to work at 7:30.

Teacher: I.

Students: I go to work at 7:30.

At this point, we should say a word about pronunciation. In the beginning, your students may have many problems with the production of English sounds. While it is important for them to be clear in their speech, do not over-correct them. Your first objective is to help them become more comfortable using the language, and this will not happen if you do not accept anything they say. Decide what pronunciation problems are a priority, and work on those first. For example, most Indochinese students will have trouble hearing and reproducing final consonant sounds. Choose a symbol or a gesture that will remind them to pronounce certain sounds, like the final s in plurals, without your constantly repeating the correct answer. In this way, they can correct themselves and will learn to avoid making the same mistakes. It is generally not effective to isolate sounds out of context at this level. As your students start to read, you can emphasize the contrasts between certain sounds more meaningfully.

(3) Operations

Operations are a series of short sentences that describe a procedure. The teacher mimes the actions described while repeating the sentences.

Teacher: I go to the store.

I buy tomatoes, cabbage, and onions.

I pay the cashier.

I go home.

The students repeat the operation sentence by sentence as the teacher mimes the actions. Eventually, the students can say the entire sequence themselves. Individuals can then be called on to act out the procedure. This is an excellent way to practice structures. As a student performs the operation, the teacher can ask such questions as "What is she (or he) doing?" or "What did you do?" While it is true that these situations are contrived, they allow the students to go from simple repetition to applying the language in a meaningful fashion.

Response Exercises

Response exercises follow repetition. To obtain a response from your students, you must teach them to listen for a stimulus, usually in the form of a question. You may not expect your students to be able to reproduce the question as well as the response, so you may have to discourage their repetition of question forms at first. Again, the importance of their learning to listen is emphasized.

You can move directly into response exercises from repetition. For example:

Teacher: The pot is on the stove.

Students: The pot is on the stove.

Teacher: (Gesturing "Listen, don't speak," holds up question mark to cue question form.) Where is the pot? The pot is on the stove. (Repeats two or three times.)

Teacher: The pot is on the stove. (Gesture "Repeat.")

Students: The pot is on the stove.

Teacher: (Indicating self and holding up question mark.) Where is the pot?

(Indicating students and putting down question mark.) The pot is on the stove. (Gesture "Repeat.")

If the students have problems answering correctly, you can prompt them until they understand that they are not to repeat the question, only the response. When they are comfortable with the response, you may then teach them to ask the question.

To teach Yes/No responses, you may want to try the following. Hold up known objects and say the name, e.g., "An apple." Then hold up a known object and say an incorrect name; for example, say, "An orange" as you hold up a banana. Wait for student reaction. Teach your students to respond with "No" to incorrect names and "Yes" to correct names.

Teacher: (Holding up an apple.) An apple.

Students: Yes.

Teacher: (Holding up an orange.) A banana.

Students: No.

Teacher: (Holding up a banana and using questioning intonation.) An orange?

Students: No.

Teacher: (Holding up an orange.) Is this an orange?

Students: Yes.

Teacher: (Holding up an apple.) Is this a banana?

Students: No.

Pattern drilling is a way of practicing vocabulary and structure. In the above exercises, we can see the teacher leading the students toward correct usage while not actually explaining what the structures mean. This should be implicit in the exercises. However, it is important to remember that the focus of the ESL/coping skills lesson is not on the development of correct grammatical usage, but on meaningful communication. Grammar should be viewed as a means of clarifying message sending and receiving--your students' most immediate need. As an illustration of this point, let's look at the student who has practiced a telephone dialogue in class but has never actually used the telephone to call an English-speaking person. One day the teacher receives a phone call from the student, who says, "Teacher, I no come school today. Baby sick." Rather than being discouraged about the faulty grammar, the teacher should be pleased at the student's ability to send a correct message in English.

When you plan your curriculum, you can determine which structures are natural to the contexts you will employ. It is not necessary to follow a strict order of grammatical points, as you will find in some textbooks, but you should be careful not to use advanced structures too soon. The important thing is not to discourage communication. If your students tell you about the past weekend while using the simple present tense, do not be overly concerned. It could be that in their language, a past verb form does not exist. You can introduce the past gradually in oral contexts, but it may not be until your students learn to read that they will be sensitive to its usage.

One way of making your students more aware of how they speak is to have them correct themselves. In a case where you have previously taught a grammar point and are sure your students have understood it, when you hear a mistake you can make a gesture that means "Stop and correct yourself." For example, when speaking about other people, a student frequently confuses "he" and "she." When you hear the error, hold up a finger or your hand. Correct your student the first time. When the error occurs again, use the same gesture and wait for the student to make the correction. Soon your students will correct themselves and each other without too much assistance from you. In doing so, they will begin to understand that structure is important to the language.

Here is a list of high frequency structures and the possible contexts in which they may be presented:

- Imperative verbs with directives:
  "Go straight."
  "Turn left."
  "Don't talk."

- Personal pronouns and simple present with time:
  "I get up at 6:30."
  "He eats breakfast at 8:00."

- Wh-questions with personal information questions:
  "Where are you from?"
  "Who is your sponsor?"
  "What is your social security number?"

- Possessive adjectives with introductions:
  "This is my husband. His name is Shoua Her."

- Yes/No questions with clothing needs:
  "Are you cold?"
  "Do you have a coat?"

- How much/how many, with money:
  "How many dollars do you have?"
  "How much does it cost?"

- Prepositions with classroom directions:
  "Put the paper in your notebook."
  "Put your pencils on the table."

- The modal "can" to call in sick:
  "I cannot come to school today."

- Adjectives to describe family members and others:
  "My children are young."
  "My father is dead."
  "My wife is pregnant."
  "The robber is tall. He is thin. He is wearing a black shirt and brown pants."

- Past tense to describe work experience:
  "I was a fisherman in Vietnam."
  "I was a farmer in Laos. I grew rice and cor..."

If your students will eventually use a textbook, structure will become more important. In the beginning, keep it simple and utilitarian.

Application

After you have practiced listening and speaking skills through controlled exercises, it is time to have your students use what has been taught. If you are tutoring a student in his or her home, you will have a wealth of opportunities to present material in real contexts. Classroom teachers do not often have the facilities to do so, but through contrived situations such as dialogues and role playing you can offer your students the next best thing to real language use. The most important part of application is to make your students feel the need to use the language and see its effectiveness. Therefore, make your dialogues as useful as possible; for example, teach your students to ask for assistance.

Student A: Please help me. I am lost.

Student B: Where do you live?

A: 583 West Street.

B: Walk north six blocks and turn left.

A: Thank you.

B: You're welcome.

The length of the dialogue should be anywhere from two to ten lines, depending on what your students can handle. You may start teaching a dialogue and add on to it over a period of time, but overly long dialogues tend to become laborious for all concerned. You can increase the reality of your dialogues by role-playing them with appropriate props, and, in some cases, with visitors to your class taking one of the roles in order to give the students experience with other voices besides your own. For instance, practice a visit to the doctor. You or a third party takes the role of the doctor while your students are the patients:

Student A: What's the matter?

Student B: I'm sick.

A: What are your symptoms?

B: I have a fever. My stomach hurts.

More advanced students can act as translators for a friend:

Student A: What's the matter?

Student B: He says he's sick.

A: What are his symptoms?

B: He says he has a fever and his stomach hurts.

The steps in teaching a dialogue may vary from teacher to teacher. You may decide to present your dialogue first and then go back to practicing the controlled exercises for speaking and listening, especially if your students are more advanced. Model the dialogue two or three times before you ask your students to repeat. Use pictures, puppets, or body language to show them that two people are speaking. During repetition and roleplay, help your students achieve realistic intonation.

The Multilevel Class

In spite of your assessment, you may find that your class includes more than one level of English ability. If you gear your

class to the faster element, the slower students will miss out and end up by repeating the level. If you move too slowly, the faster students will become impatient. In the event that you cannot move your students to more appropriate classes, you will have to find ways to address the needs of both groups. You might be able to use your faster students as models, if they are willing, and encourage them to tutor the slower ones. You can show your advanced students that you expect more from them by insisting on more accurate pronunciation and more vocabulary retention, and by giving them more responsibility in the classroom. Be careful not to be over-critical, however, and give positive feedback.

Because reading is often a focal point in more advanced classes, you need not hold back on presenting literacy skills, even if your slower students are not ready. Work out some exercises appropriate to the different levels represented in your class and spend part of the class working in groups. Your slower students may simply copy numbers or letters while your more advanced students learn sight words or sound/symbol correspondence. Or, your slower students may be learning number symbol and concept correspondence while you teach your faster students some simple math skills such as addition and subtraction. The one point to keep in mind when teaching the multilevel class is not to measure all your students by the same standards. On a relative scale, the slower students may be learning just as quickly as the more advanced ones.

The Literacy Factor

So far we have been concerned with the development of listening and speaking skills in the ESL/coping skills class. Undoubtedly, your students will want to learn to read and write their new language as well. Most teachers feel that written work reinforces what has been taught orally. If your students are not proficient at reading and writing English, however, you must decide when, how, and to what extent to present literacy skills. Because you are concerned with teaching coping skills in ESL, we will examine the literacy factor on that level. In doing so, we will discuss the evaluation of the students' literacy ability, the assessment of their needs, and, finally, some strategies for teaching beginning literacy skills.

Evaluation of Student Literacy

Before you teach your students to read, you should try to determine what literacy skills they already have. You can do this by finding the answers to the following questions during your initial assessment of student ability:

- Is the student literate in English?
- Is the student literate in his or her own or another language?
- If so, does that language use the Roman alphabet with the same sound/symbol correspondence as English?

To test for the answer to the first question, show the students some simple words (e.g., pen, name, man). If they read them without hesitation, advance to phrases or simple sentences. Increase the amount and level of the reading until they can go no further. Remember that even if students are literate in English, their reading skills may be more advanced than their oral skills. Comprehension in reading will probably depend on further development of oral ability.

To test for the answer to the second question, you should have some sample words and reading passages in the first language of your students, or, if they have been to school, in the language of instruction of the country. If you have no translator to assist you, you will have to try to judge the facility with which they are reading. Point to a word and ask the meaning. Be sure to give the students time to look at the reading. They will tell you if they simply cannot do it.

The answer to the third question will tell you something about the ease with which the students will learn literacy skills in English. If students are literate in Cambodian, but not English, they will need to learn a different alphabet system. A literate Vietnamese student will probably have less difficulty with English literacy skills, because both languages are based on the Roman alphabet (although your Vietnamese student may have great difficulties with English pronunciation).

First language literacy is obviously an advantage in learning to read and write a second language. However, teaching students to read and write their own language as a motivational factor in second language literacy is a benefit that funding generally does not allow. That is why it is important to have some clear reading objectives for your illiterate students. This brings us to the discussion of their literacy needs in coping in the new culture.

Assessment of Student Literacy Needs

Although all your students may expect to learn to read and write English, not all of them will succeed to the same degree. There is no hard and fast rule as to which students will learn reading more easily than others, but generally those students who believe they are too old to learn or who do not see an immediate application for the reading skills they learn in class will have a more difficult time of it. In addition, some of your students may have handicaps or learning disabilities that interfere with their acquisition of literacy skills. For this reason, it is a mistake to base the success or failure of students in an ESL/coping skills program on their progress in reading. The ability of the student to read should be judged on the level of need that student will eventually have in the area of literacy. Let's look at some objectives for potential readers:

- Student A is not literate in any language, has no prior educational experience, and is probably not bound for employment outside the home. In this case, literacy skill training should emphasize the ability to read prices, common public signs (e.g., Walk, No Smoking, Men/Women), and personal information (e.g., name, address, telephone).

- Student B is literate in his or her own language and has some educational experience. She or he will eventually seek employment that may require some reading ability. A more advanced level of reading is therefore desirable. Although this student will probably move into a textbook after initial skills are acquired, you should not depend on the textbook alone, but continue to do a good deal of supplementary

work. The language presented in the book does not always correspond to the real language needs of the student.

. Student C is literate and educated in his or her first language and plans to take a vocational training course or to enter a GED program. The literacy skills you present will be relative to this level, but do not neglect the immediate needs of your student. This student will have the same initial need for reading survival English as the other two students. She or he may also need to learn some math terminology in English in preparation for vocational classes.

The Development of Literacy Skills

For the purposes of this paper, we will concentrate on the reading needs of students A and B above. The teacher of these students should refrain from presenting too many literacy skills too soon. It is better to concentrate on the development of discrimination between different symbols and the ability to reproduce numbers and letters as needed in personal information. After the students have achieved some degree of oral ability, the teacher may present some sight words that represent words that the students know. Initially, it is not necessary to choose reading vocabulary on the basis of its phonetic regularities. Rather, teach your students to read what they can understand and say. It will be more immediately meaningful to them.

The development of second language literacy skills will probably follow these steps: (1) symbol discrimination, (2) sight word recognition, and (3) phonics and decoding. We will now look at each of these steps in relation to the coping skills you will be teaching.

Symbol discrimination

This step is actually ongoing in the beginning stages of literacy skill development. It is not essential that your students recognize all the letters of the alphabet, both upper and lower case, before they are presented with sight words. The first literacy priority for everyone is to be able to read and write his or her own name and address. You should write samples for each student to copy in class and at home. At first, give your students plenty of time to write their names and addresses, but gradually demand that they write more quickly. Using a letter and number chart, teach your students to repeat the names of the symbols. Put letters and numbers of similar shape on separate charts and work on them (e.g., for A, H, K, R and for

3, 5, 6, 8). Give each student a set of letter cards and have them work in pairs to match their letters. Have them copy letters and numbers from another piece of paper or from the chalkboard, and, finally, have them write letters and numbers as you dictate them.

Sight-Word Recognition

If you have experience teaching reading to English speakers, you may disagree with the sight-word approach and wish to start your students out in reading with a better idea of sound/symbol correspondence. However, interest and language priority will play a role in the motivation of your students to read. By learning to read the words and sentences they have already learned to say, your students will find immediate meaning in reading. This is not true if they are simply learning "cat, hat, fat." Table phonics for the time being, especially for students with no first language literacy skills. If these students will only be reading at a basic survival level, it is more important for them to learn to recognize certain words and symbols as a whole.

Sight words are whole words written on cue cards. The student learns to recognize these words by shape and distinctive features. Initially, the teacher may associate the word with a picture that cues a response from the students. Eventually, the students will respond to the sight word in the same way they respond to the picture. The use of sight words eliminates the need to write during a lesson. With the words you want to teach already written on cards, you can manipulate them more easily and hand them around to the students. Try the following activities for teaching sight words:

- Show the students some pictures and have them give the vocabulary required.
- Show the sight words with the pictures and practice two or three times.
- Separate the sight words from the pictures and have the students read them. Give picture cues where necessary.
- Using a pocket chart, have the students match the pictures to the sight words.
- Teach sight sentences based on simple question-and-answer dialogues that the students have learned.
- Familiarize your students with the question mark.

When your students begin to mix up words that commence with the same letter, such as "banana" and "bread," they are starting to pay attention to the individual letters in a word. You can begin to work with phonics at this point.

Phonics and Decoding

Each of these reading steps overlaps the other, so you should not discontinue building your students' sight-word vocabulary just because you have begun phonics work. Initially, you will want to call your students' attention to similar symbols and sounds. This is easiest if you begin to work with consonants in the initial position. The following exercises are effective:

- Group sight words by initial consonants.
- Isolate the consonants and practice the sounds they represent; work on common digraphs such as ch and sh as well.
- Hold up cards with consonant and digraph sounds on them; have students respond with the sound, not the names of the letters.
- To check your students' aural understanding of the sounds, give them consonant and digraph cards to be held up as you say the various sounds represented.
- Say words that the students know and have them identify the initial consonant or digraph. If this exercise is easy for them, go on to some words they do not know.
- Have your students keep a lexicon of words, with a separate page for each consonant.

By now, your students will have a fairly good sight-word vocabulary, and you will be able to begin working with vowel sounds. Your students may be able to decode simple words based on their experience so far. As you proceed to teach them to decode, do not overlook the importance of meaning in reading. You want to teach your students to read for information. Yet, when you work on phonics and decoding, meaning tends to become subordinated to the mechanical process of reading. To avoid this situation, try to use familiar words in phonics exercises.

Experience Story Approach

Just as oral skill development is most meaningful when it is applied, so literacy skills become real and useful to the students

when they discover that they can read something of high interest to them. This is the premise on which the experience story approach was developed. Teachers use the students' own language to lead them into reading. For example, if a student comes into the classroom and says he has lost his hat, the teacher can capitalize on the situation by writing the story down. Assuming it is a subject of interest to all, or even just to that particular student, motivation to connect the written and oral stories should be high. Some teachers would argue that it is not even necessary that students have any prior reading experience such as letter discrimination. However, you will find the experience story most effective at the sight-word level when you are ready to work with phonics.

The following steps are generally followed when teaching an experience story:

- The student tells a story.
- The teacher writes the story on the chalkboard or a flip-chart, correcting or supplying structure, but otherwise using the student's own words.
- The teacher reads the story several times with the student and the rest of the class.
- The students are then asked to read the story individually.
- The students identify key words.

One of the advantages of the experience story is the immediate application it can have to real situations. Students who will probably not advance to the decoding stage will still enjoy learning to read simple stories about themselves and their experiences. You might try making booklets for each student to read, containing his or her own experience stories.

The Use of "Real" Materials to Teach Reading

The ESL/coping skills teacher will be most concerned with teaching immediately useful reading, which means that the reading material should be "real." For example:

- Put common survival signs (e.g., No smoking, Exit, Stop) on the walls of the classroom. Your students will learn to recognize them easily. Reinforce their meaning regularly.
- Teach your students to read prices and common measurements as they appear on coupon pages in the newspaper: $1.29/ea., 98¢/lb., $1.35/doz.

- Teach your students to read and write such personal information as name, address, telephone number, birthdate, I-94 number, etc. Make up a simple identification form that you can fill out with your students. Do not try to use a complicated job application form.

- Collect labels and containers for those products that your students may wish to buy (e.g., soap, detergent, shampoo, aspirin). Teach them to look for key words on the label. Demonstrate the use of the product as part of the lesson. Also look for such warning symbols and words as "poison" to point out to your students.

- Using a map or simplified street system, give your students simple written directions to follow with their pencils.

- Give your students calendars or have them make some. Teach them to read and write dates and days of the week. Encourage them to make note of appointments they may have.

- Use clothing labels to teach washing instructions (e.g., "hand wash" or "machine wash").

- Get a driver's manual to help your students prepare to take a driving test. Concentrate on teaching the meaning of key directional words, especially those on American road signs (Stop, Yield, Do Not Enter).

In addition to the "real" reading materials, you will want to have other reading facilitators on hand: a pocket chart (you can get these commercially or make them from tag board), plenty of cards for sight words, paper strips for writing sentences to be used in the pocket chart, lined newsprint paper for student copying, alphabet and number charts, and flipcharts for experience stories. If funding for materials is a problem, you can make most of the above items at very little expense. Also, keep in touch with your local public school. They may be able to tell you where you can obtain paper scraps or surplus.

Cultural Considerations

Culture is an intrinsic part of language. A student will learn a good deal about a culture just by studying its language. However, problems arise when the student is suffering culture shock, a period of confusion and depression resulting from being surrounded by the unfamiliar. For most refugees, the realization that they must learn to live in this society and may never be able to return to their country and a familiar way of life may compound the difficulties they have learning the new language. The ESL teacher must be sensitive to feelings of fear, sadness, and even anger on the part of the students. Yet most refugee students will want to learn the language they hear around them every day. They simply may not know how to go about this or they may think that the teacher has a magical ability to make them learn.

ESL teachers who teach coping skills to students whose traditions and customs are dramatically different from ours must decide what aspects of American culture will affect the students' adjustment. This requires the ability to view one's own culture through the eyes of the newcomers. What we take for granted in daily life (supermarkets, heat, modern plumbing, etc.) may be a source of bewilderment and sometimes danger to the newly arrived refugee. While teaching our own way of life, we must be ever mindful of the students' native culture and respect the traditions the students bring with them. This does not mean getting overly concerned about committing a cross-cultural gaff. While it is wise to be familiar with the students' cultural do's and don't's, the teacher should try to be natural in the classroom. After all, the students want to learn what is correct in this culture.

Students who seem to have problems learning English and simple coping skills may be experiencing interference from their first culture. The following factors may affect their adjustment and language acquisition:

Traditional Educational Attitudes

If your students have had any prior education, or even if they have not, they may have some assumptions about learning that do not correspond to your own. In much of the world, learning is based on memorization through oral chanting or copying from a chalkboard. The teacher is the absolute authority in the classroom, and all attention must be given to him or her. Independent or small-group work is not common.

Your goal is to get your students from the repetition stage to the application stage. You want them to use the language they

learn, not simply to reproduce what they hear. Yet they may resist those wonderfully creative exercises you plan. A simple drill may become a major production. The games that worked well with other students may not be popular with this group.

Be patient with your students and give them time to adjust to your way of teaching. It is just as important for you to adapt to their way of learning. With adjustments on both sides, you should reach a happy compromise.

Age and Past Status

Many of the Indochinese refugees who end up in ESL classes are older people who have never been to school. It is especially difficult for them to adjust to a learning environment. The teacher must consider their present status in relation to the position that they may have traditionally held in their first culture. Back home, they may have been revered in their old age, their counsel sought in family affairs. In the strange new environment, they tend to become dependent on the younger family members, even on very young children to guide them outside the home. Simple coping skills are a very real need for them so that they may retain a sense of responsibility in the family.

Another student who may suffer from loss of status is the former military officer or village leader. Anyone who was in a position of authority in his old life may well find himself seated next to his former inferiors. Even worse, he may be slower to learn the new language than those he once commanded. Similarly, husbands, who were traditionally heads of the household, may end up in lower levels than their wives, for whom the chance to go to school is a wonderful new opportunity. It is helpful to keep these factors in mind when dealing with your students. Rather than emphasizing students' weaknesses in relation to their classmates (never a good practice anyway), you can help to build up their self-esteem by identifying their strengths and giving them positive feedback. In the meantime, try to set up additional tutoring for them, if it would be beneficial.

Lack of Need

It is traditional for immigrant groups to establish their own communities in the new country. In this way, as each group of arrivals adjusts, it can in turn help those who come after it. One disadvantage of this otherwise helpful system is that by acting as a buffer between the new arrival and the society at large, the immigrant community reduces the need for the person to learn the second language. Feeling a need to learn a

language is an important motivational factor. This is not to suggest that living in an immigrant community is detrimental to all language learners. However, the ESL teacher of students who live among speakers of their first language must provide these students with plenty of practical situations in which to practice their language skills, thereby making the need to cope real and immediate rather than in some unforeseen distant time. Also, it may be possible to get other family members or community members to assist the students in practicing their skills.

Interference from the first culture need not always be a disadvantage in teaching students to cope. By showing an interest in the old ways of your students, you can encourage them to be open to new ways of dealing with their daily lives. For example, many Indochinese retain aspects of their traditional medicine. In a lesson about health, you can use vocabulary that describes some important features of their folkways (e.g., herbs, shaman, acupuncture). Before teaching food, you should try to discover what foods the students traditionally eat or do not eat. Such words as "ginger," "garlic," and "mushroom" may be vocabulary of high interest to your Indochinese students.

In general, cultural sensitivity can go a long way toward opening the door to the new culture. Unless discussion of aspects of the old culture is embarrassing or uncomfortable for the students, it should not be ignored. Besides serving as a linguistic catalyst, talking about traditions of the past in respect to the present environment can help the students to gain a sense of perspective that may help them to adjust more quickly.

The Use of Community Resources

Many coping skills programs find themselves at a loss for appropriate materials. While there are a few commercial textbooks that are based on survival skills, coping skills teachers usually wind up gathering "real" suppplementary materials. There are resources in most communities that can be tapped for survival information. However, some of this information may require the assistance of a bilingual translator. If no translator is available to you, you will have to learn to adapt general materials to suit your situation, or you may simply have to avoid subject areas that are not easily simplified, such as insurance or tenants' rights. Beginning coping skills classes cannot encompass everything.

Community Resources Requiring an Interpreter

Police/Fire Information

It is important for all members of the community to have access to the services of the police and fire departments. Your students will probably depend on go-betweens in their first language group However, they can learn to dial an emergency number, state the problem ("Fire," "Help," "Please come") and give their address. Once the police or firemen are at the scene, they will probably need the services of a translator for filling out a report, but at least they will be able to respond to the call.

To teach your students the coping skills required for making an emergency call of this nature, you will need to be sure that they can dial a telephone number, speak clearly, spell out the name of their street, and know the correct words to use to summon help. Using a real or toy telephone as a prop, try a dialogue like the following:

Student 1: Police Department.

Student 2: I need help. Please come.

Student 1: What is your address?

Student 2: 245 South Street. S - O - U - T - H.

For further suggestions on how to help your students be prepared to handle an emergency, call your local fire or police departments.

Health Information

Your students will probably have had some experience with our medical system. It may confuse or frighten them, or they may accept it as a part of their new life. In areas of heavy refugee concentration, there will probably be medical translators available. However, your students can start taking a certain amount of responsibility for themselves if they understand what to expect in a routine medical examination. If you do not have access to an interpreter, try to explain some of the standard procedures that patients go through, e.g., blood test, blood pressure, temperature, height and weight, urinalysis, etc. You can teach your students words to describe common symptoms (fever, vomit, cough). Even a simple dialogue can give your students more control over their situation:

Doctor: What's the matter?

Patient: My head hurts.

Contact your local department of public health or the hospital or clinic most frequented by your students. For nutritional charts and hygiene information, you might also try your county agricultural or cooperative extension office. If all else fails, you can at least teach your students some measures for preventing the spreading of germs in the classroom. Be sure to have a supply of tissue available during the season when your students will be most susceptible to colds. Teach them to dress properly for the climate and where to find the clothing they need for themselves and their children.

Legal/Civic Information

Although you may not be involved enough with your students to know what personal legal needs they have, there are laws that may affect them of which they are not aware: the legal ages for marriage, drinking, and driving a car, for example, may be of interest to them. They may want to know how to get hunting and fishing licenses and when seasons begin and end. If you have the use of a translator, you can do some investigation of your students' perceptions of their rights and obligations as residents of their community. You may be surprised at some of the misconceptions they have, but do not be defensive about your culture. You have the opportunity not only to enlighten others, but to be enlightened by them. It is always interesting, though often disconcerting, to see your culture through your students' eyes.

For advice on legal and civic matters, look at the various offices under city or county government in your phone book. Make

some phone calls. If your students receive public assistance, call your local division of Health and Human Services to learn what legal or civic affairs your students are expected to deal with.

Community Resources Not Requiring an Interpreter

Public or School Library

Teachers of pre-literate students are continually on the lookout for materials to enrich and supplement their lessons. You can often get ideas for materials in educational or school supply stores. Even better, make an appointment to visit a local school and look at what they use to teach reading, simple math concepts, and civic information to elementary school children. Teaching young children in their first language is certainly different from teaching pre-literate adults in a second language, but there are similarities that make some elementary school materials interesting, as long as they are not too childish.

The local public library is another possible source of materials. Books containing relevant pictures and maps can help illustrate your lesson. In many libraries, films can be borrowed free or for a small charge by cardholders. Short silent films can be wonderful fun. If your students are advanced enough, films can be used for practice in describing action. Films that show what your state or the country looks like are also interesting to students. In choosing a film, decide how important the dialogue is to the clarity of the film. Your librarian may be able to advise you here.

Stores and General Environment

One of the more important survival skills your students need is the ability to shop for food and clothing. If you can, take your class to the store where they usually shop. Find out what difficulties the cashier and other store workers have in dealing with their non-English-speaking clientele. Notice how food is priced and packaged, and what containers have a deposit on them. Make a map of the store and indicate the location of general items. By using the real shopping place, you will help your students feel comfortable, and they can apply what they learn immediately.

You can exploit the general environment for survival material, too. Street signs, road signs, traffic crossings, bus stops--

all are important aids to the lesson on coping. Find out what neighborhoods your students live in, how they come to school, and what signs they must recognize or what skills are required of them. If you drive a car and your students take the bus, try taking the bus once or twice, preferably with them. Ask the bus driver for suggested phrases or skills to teach.

Machines

Your students come into daily contact with machines they don't understand. Some of them may not be important, while others are of interest or a necessity. For example, although all your students may not have cars, they may still be a source of interest. Learning the names for major car parts could be a priority for them, especially if they plan on obtaining a driver's license.

The telephone is another source of interest and even a necessity. Students who have never used telephones may find them hard to dial. The various tones of the telephone may be confusing to them. Use a toy phone or, better yet, the real thing. Check with the local telephone company to see if they have any educational training equipment to loan. When your students are able to manipulate the phone, have them call you at home. Teach them a dialogue to use on the phone. Also, practice the police, fire, and ambulance numbers.

Other machines may touch your students' lives: washing machines and dryers, radios, television sets, such appliances as refrigerators and vacuum cleaners, and even simple devices like can openers. All have their relative importance and all can be the basis for vocabulary, structure practice, and dialogues. Just look around for ideas.

Conclusion

The teaching of coping skills through ESL helps to facilitate the acculturation process by providing newly arrived refugees with language keys to the community. While methods and materials are important to the ESL/coping skills course, the teacher must keep in mind the main objective of the course and direct his or her teaching to the level and learning style of the students. Where possible, "real" materials should be used. Language skills should be applied to community situations. The teacher should be aware of possible interference from the students' first culture.

The development of realistic, coping-oriented objectives requires an examination of the students' backgrounds, the potential lifestyles offered by the community, and what needs these entail. In addition, curriculum planners and ESL/coping skills teachers must be realistic about the limitations of the English-speaking teacher as cultural informant when teaching students of limited English proficiency. While most ESL teachers are capable of imparting basic survival skills information, the students, as well as the community, may have unrealistic expectations for the course. It is particularly important for the teacher to make the students feel that their language instruction is a means to an end: the application of the language.

Although many refugees are finding their niche in American society, there are still others arriving. The need for a coping skills curriculum in many ESL programs will not disappear. At present, there are few commercial materials available that suit the ESL/coping skills curriculum, and teacher-made materials are often preferable to these. ESL teacher-training programs must, therefore, provide trainees with a foundation in the development and adaptation of coping skills materials. These programs must also better prepare ESL teachers to deal with the illiterate student.

Finally, it is important for ESL/coping skills programs to have public support. The community in which the refugees are resettled can be more involved in the resettlement process if it understands where the refugees are from, and where, in the resettlement process, the ESL program is taking them. ESL teachers often serve as liaisons between the Americans and the refugees. While educating the refugees about the community, they should also educate the Americans about the newest additions to a society that has a long tradition of absorbing newcomers.

APPENDIX A

Sample Lesson Plan

Objective: To teach clothing names (shirt, pants, shoes): "I am wearing...." "What are you wearing?" Review I, you, she, he with colors, and "What color is your...?"

I. Review

II. Check homework

III. New Material

A. A/O

1. Listening (use real clothes, doll clothes, or pictures)

"A shirt, pants, shoes"
"A green shirt, a red shirt"
"Point to the red shirt," etc.

2. Speaking

a. Repetition

"A shirt, pants, shoes"
"I am wearing a shirt."
"I am wearing pants."
"I am wearing shoes."
"I am wearing a shirt, pants, and shoes."
"He/she," etc.

b. Response

"I am wearing a shirt, pants, and shoes."
"What are you wearing?"
"What is he/she wearing?"

c. Application/Dialogue

Speaker 1: My child is lost.

Speaker 2: What is he wearing?

1: He is wearing a blue shirt, brown pants, and white shoes.

2: There he is.

Hold up pictures of people:

"What is she/he wearing?"

B. Literacy

1. Sight words (oral prep): "What are you wearing?" As students answer, hold up sight word for clothes: "shirt," "pants," "shoes."

   Using pocket chart:

   a. Match "shirt," "pants," "shoes" to pictures. Read together. Take words out and hold them separately. Have students read them together.

   b. Point out special features (e.g., sh, final s in "pants" and "shoes").

   c. Put different colored pants, shirt, and shoe pictures in pocket chart and have students identify them. Add color sight words (previously learned).

   d. Give students pictures and have them match to sight words in pocket chart.

   e. Give students sight words and have them match to pictures.

   f. Put sentence in pocket chart: "I am wearing a red shirt."

      Read together, individually.

   g. Substitute: blue pants

      black shoes, etc.

   h. Substitute: He is

      She is

      You are

Using paper: Have students read sentences.

2. Writing: Have students write vocabulary beside pictures.

IV. Assign homework: Copy sentences.

V. Listening game review: Teacher describes one student in class. Teacher says, "He is wearing a blue shirt, brown pants, and brown shoes. Who is he?" Students must identify the person.

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